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Durenberger urges Reagan to support words with action in Central America

By Walter Andrews
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The Reagan administration may need to take firm, direct action against Nicaragua if it hopes to achieve peace in the region, the Senate Intelligence Committee chairman said yesterday.

The United States should adopt a comprehensive, long-term Central American policy involving all the countries of the region, Sen. David Durenberger said.

"Americans are confused by the strength of administration rhetoric and the absence of administration action," he said.

"What we need is a comprehensive policy which can provide a road map for the future," the Minnesota Republican told a National Press Club gathering. "Thus far, the Reagan administration has failed to provide such a road map."

"We need to stop confusing ... intentions with accomplishments; rhetoric with reality; and congressional micromanagement with congressional over-

sight," the senator said in his prepared policy statement.

"In Nicaragua, they know there is no real U.S. policy, and all sides are therefore engaged in a form of ritualized theatrics designed to create one by default," he said.

Attempts to achieve a Central American peace through the so-called "Contadora process" by involving Latin American nations such as Mexico, Columbia and Peru in negotiations are not going to be successful, the senator said.

"It's an imposed solution in a sense," he said. "It is to a degree, and it has the potential of being a gutless kind of solution."

The administration should work with Congress in forming a U.S. regional alliance with Nicaragua's neighbors directly or through the existing structure of the Organization of American States, Mr. Durenberger said.

"Regional collective action is a tool we have simply overlooked thus far, prefer-

ring to rely on unilateral programs and declarations," he said.

That would put the United States in the more favorable position of being able to take economic and military measures against Nicaragua at the request of this regional group rather than taking unpopular action alone against a much smaller nation, the senator said.

Possible sanctions could include severing diplomatic relations with the Sandinista government, cutting off trade, and imposing a blockade or quarantine, he said.

Mr. Durenberger said he would not be optimistic about long-term Central American policy "until Costa Rica and El Salvador and Honduras and Guatemala ... start speaking as a regional force about the value of democracy."

Asked what the Reagan administration should do first, he said it should talk to "certain congressional leaders," and get these leaders involved in talking with the Central American countries.

The administration's proposal to seek

\$14 million in "covert" military aid to the resistance fighters in Nicaragua "is simply at a dead end," the senator said.

"Congress won't be a party to the illogical and illegal absurdity of pretending that we are not providing military assistance when it is widely and publicly known that we are," he commented.



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Sen. David Durenberger